

## A WORLD OF MANY LANGUAGES

1. Analyse the picture and say what it suggests to you.
2. Read the following text and identify its key idea(s).

In biblical literature, the Tower of Babel was a structure built in the land of Shinar (Babylonia) some time after the Deluge. The story of its construction, given in Genesis 11:1-9, appears to be an attempt to explain the existence of diverse human languages. According to Genesis, the Babylonians wanted to make a name for themselves by building a mighty city and a tower “with its top in the heavens”. God disrupted the work by so confusing the language of the workers that they could no longer understand one another. The city was never completed, and the people were dispersed over the face of the earth.

**Encyclopaedia of Literature**



*"Own...what you can carry with you: know languages, know countries, know people."*

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

### WHAT IS A VARIETY?

There are many kinds of English used for different times and situations. For example, one kind of English is used for public speeches and English for chatting with friends. English in personal letters may vary greatly from English on advertisements.

English is used in different ways in different countries and cultures, too. Such systematic ethnic-based kinds of English may be considered varieties. There may be different varieties of English among various age, class and racial groups even in the same town. You can also hear different varieties of English spoken in the world. The most popular ones are what people usually call standard US or British English, but they are not the only ones. The English spoken in Singapore is quite different from the English spoken in Italy, for instance.

There are many types of differences between varieties of English: accent, grammar and spelling, to name a few. Cultural differences can also cause culturally-specific vocabulary, for example with "handy phone" or "Christmas cake" in Japanese English.

1. What does this text say about the importance of the English language in the world?